

RITA

Rita had her genesis southeast of Guam in an equatorial trough that spawned a simultaneous set of four tropical cyclones. Before Rita dissipated, she brought her influence to bear on almost every country of the Far East, with the exception of Indo-China. She persisted for 22 days, marking a record for tropical cyclone longevity in the western North Pacific. Typhoon Rita surpassed the previous record holder, Typhoon Opal (1967), for total warnings issued. In all, 79 warnings were issued on Rita.

Tracking south of Guam on 6-7 July, Rita attained typhoon strength about 120 nm northeast of Ulithi Atoll on the afternoon of the 8th. Earlier that day, an Air Force B-52 crashed into the ocean southwest of

Guam, less than 150 nm in advance of Rita. Of the six-man crew, five were rescued from the typhoon's heavy seas.

During the 24-hour period (08/1000 GMT-09/1000 GMT), Rita's winds steadily strengthened and her central pressure plummeted 35 mb. Advancing northwestward on the morning of the 10th, Rita reached super typhoon force (Figure 4-10). By the 11th her central pressure had deepened to 911 mb and the maximum winds concentrated around her circular, 20-nm-diameter eye reached 145 kt.

Rita slowed and weakened as Phyllis began to accelerate northwestward. From 12-16 July Rita described an erratic track, marked with two stalls, as Phyllis swung around her circulation and struck Japan.



FIGURE 4-10. Super Typhoon Rita 450 nm west of the Marianas. Cloudiness from the southeastern periphery of Tropical Storm Susan covers the northern Philippines. The vortex center of Susan, located 150 nm southeast of Hong Kong, appears on the edge of photo, 9 July 1972, 2322 GMT. (DAPP data)

During this period Rita's circulation expanded to cover a large portion of the Philippine Sea (Figure 4-11). By the 18th gale-force winds stretched out approximately 350 nm, except in the western quadrant. The location of Rita and Tropical Storm Susan's presence in the northern South China Sea, combined to intensify the southwest monsoon flow over Luzon. This resulted in a prolonged period of torrential rains and the most disastrous flooding in the history of the area. In just one 24-hour period on 17 July, Baguio

City recorded 18.86 in. of rain. Damages ran over 150 million dollars (U.S.) and flooding left an estimated death toll of 214 persons in its aftermath.

Rita began to slowly track northward late on the 16th. In response to a building high cell over the Sea of Japan, Rita made a bend to the west, skirting just north of Amami-o-Shima in the Ryukyu's on the evening of the 20th. The lowest minimum pressure recorded there was 968.9 mb (20/1100 GMT). Gaja Shima, 80 nm north of



FIGURE 4-11. Typhoon Rita (left) centered 400 nm southwest of Iwo Jima dominates the Philippine Sea. Typhoon Tess (right) 400 nm south of Marcus Island is at peak intensity (125 kt). The remains of Phyllis are located over western Honshu, 15 July 1972, 2219 GMT. (DAPP data)

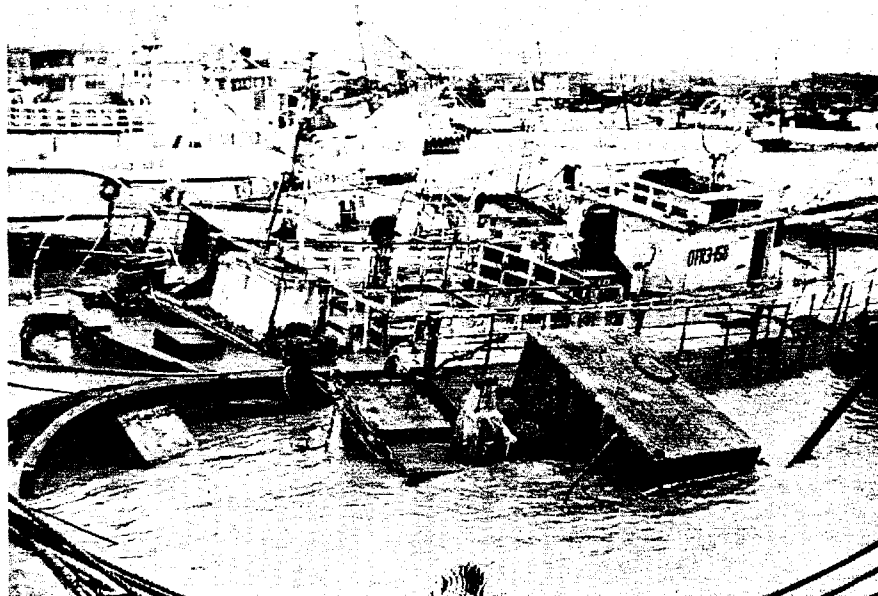


FIGURE 4-12. Tuna boats lie swamped in Naha Port, victims of Typhoon Rita's torrential rains.--Courtesy of the Okinawa Morning Star.

the center, reported sustained winds of 65 kt.

During her passage south of Kyushu, more than 23 in. of rain was recorded in two days on Mt. Yabitsu, Kyushu, and 9.68 in. in 24 hours on Kumamoto Prefecture.

As Rita entered the East China Sea, the prevailing mid-tropospheric flow weakened due to the presence of a low situated in central Manchuria. Rita was thus located in a col region and her forward progress slowed on the afternoon of the 21st. Typhoon Tess at that time had just passed north of the Bonin Islands and was located some 800 nm east of Rita. A Fujiwhara interaction took place, forcing Rita southward, describing a loop in the vicinity of the Ryukyu chain for the next three and a half days. During this loop, Rita's center passed just north of Miyako Jima and brushed the western coast of Okinawa.

The lowest pressure registered in the islands during Rita's loop was at the Futema MCAS on Okinawa with 955.6 mb (24/0730 GMT). A maximum sustained wind of 72 kt was recorded at Okinoerabu Shima and gusts to 96 kt at Kume Shima.

Heavy rains of up to 9.6 in. in some mountain stations fell on Taiwan. Several villages were flooded, rendering over 700 persons homeless, while a train between Kaohsiung and Fangliao was derailed due to floods. Reports indicated three persons dead or missing.

Heaviest rains in the Ryukyu's occurred at Okinoerabu Shima, which recorded 31.87 in. in the five-day period it was under

Rita's influence. Damage on Okinawa was primarily to farm crops. Sugar cane and pineapple crops averaged 30-35% destroyed, while the vegetable crops were also hard hit. In addition, many small boats were sunk (Figure 4-12) and several highways blocked by landslides. A total of three persons were reported killed in the Ryukyu's.

Completing the loop, Rita moved northward on the 25th. She began to accelerate as she entered a confluent zone, created by a trough over Manchuria and a building ridge over the Sea of Japan. Rita passed just west of Cheju Do on the morning of the 26th and then brushed southwestern Korea. Minimum pressure of 975.5 mb was recorded there (25/2100 GMT) with maximum sustained winds of 50 kt. Eight persons were reported killed in the southwestern tip of Korea and more than 200 buildings and 50 small boats were destroyed.

Rita accelerated to 30 kt in the Yellow Sea. She then took a more westward track, passing just south of Port Arthur on the evening of the 26th, weakening to a tropical storm. Entering the Gulf of Chihli, Rita moved ashore near Tientsin, China, and dissipated rapidly inland south of Peking on the 27th.